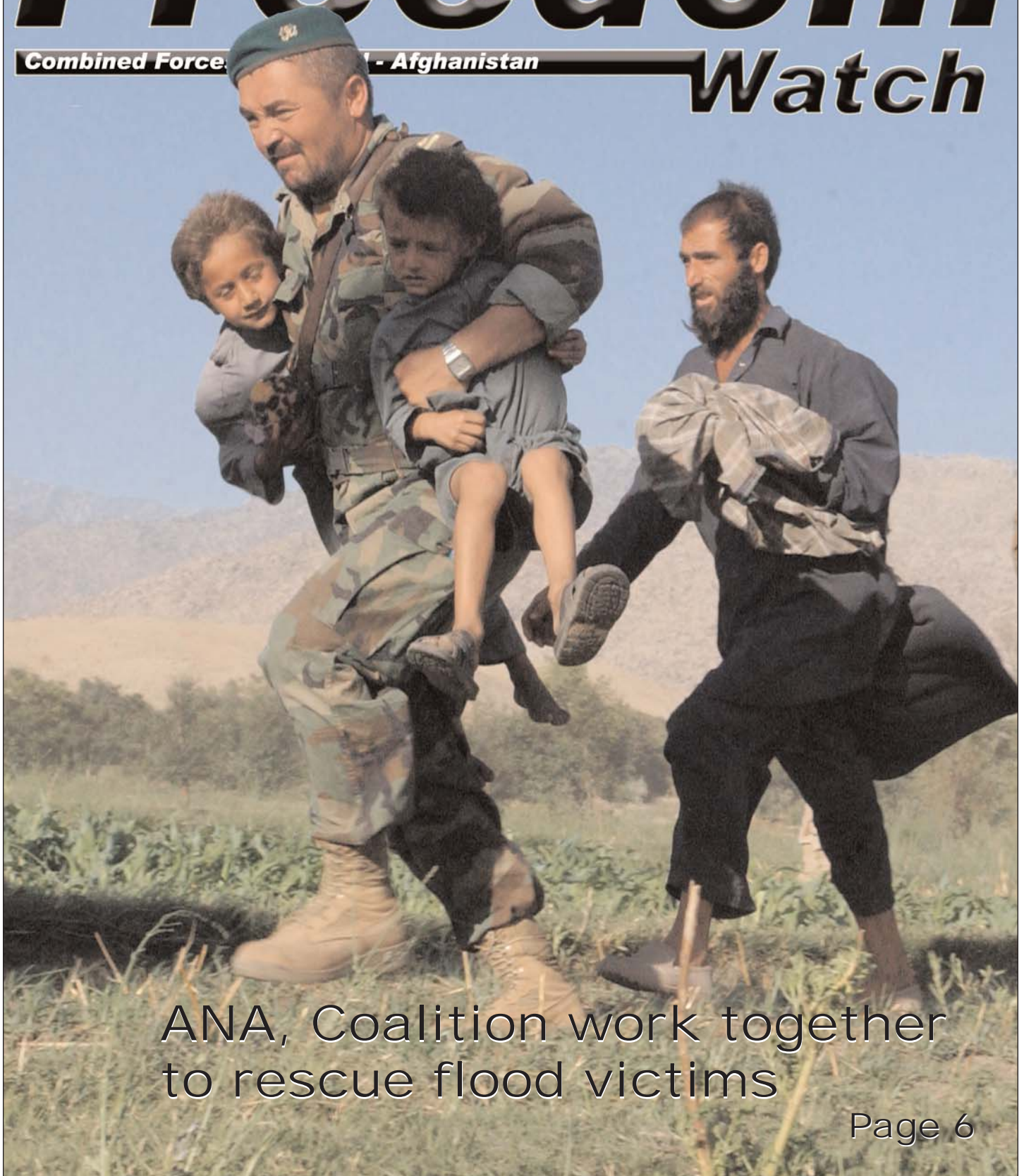


Afghanistan **Freedom** Combined Forces - Afghanistan **Watch**

July 11, 2005



ANA, Coalition work together
to rescue flood victims

Page 6

Photo by Army Sgt. James-Denton Wyllie



Marine Pfc. Kenneth Carvaugh (left) and Navy Corpsman Argel Sierra (right) of Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, are the subjects of interest of a pair of donkeys during a rest stop in the Alisheng Mountains of Laghman Province June 24. The Marines of 2/3 were in the mountains conducting patrols for terrorists and their equipment in local villages.

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A Marine EA-6B lands at Bagram Airfield using the mobile aircraft arresting system.

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(Cover) An unidentified Afghan National Army soldier carries two children to a waiting CH-47 Chinook helicopter to evacuate them from rising floodwaters of the Indus River near Mehtar Lam June 23. Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Ken Denny



Page 6: Afghans trapped by flood waters lifted to safety

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Afghanistan Freedom Watch

Freedom Watch is the weekly publication of Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan.

CFC-A Commander - Lt. Gen. Karl W. Eikenberry
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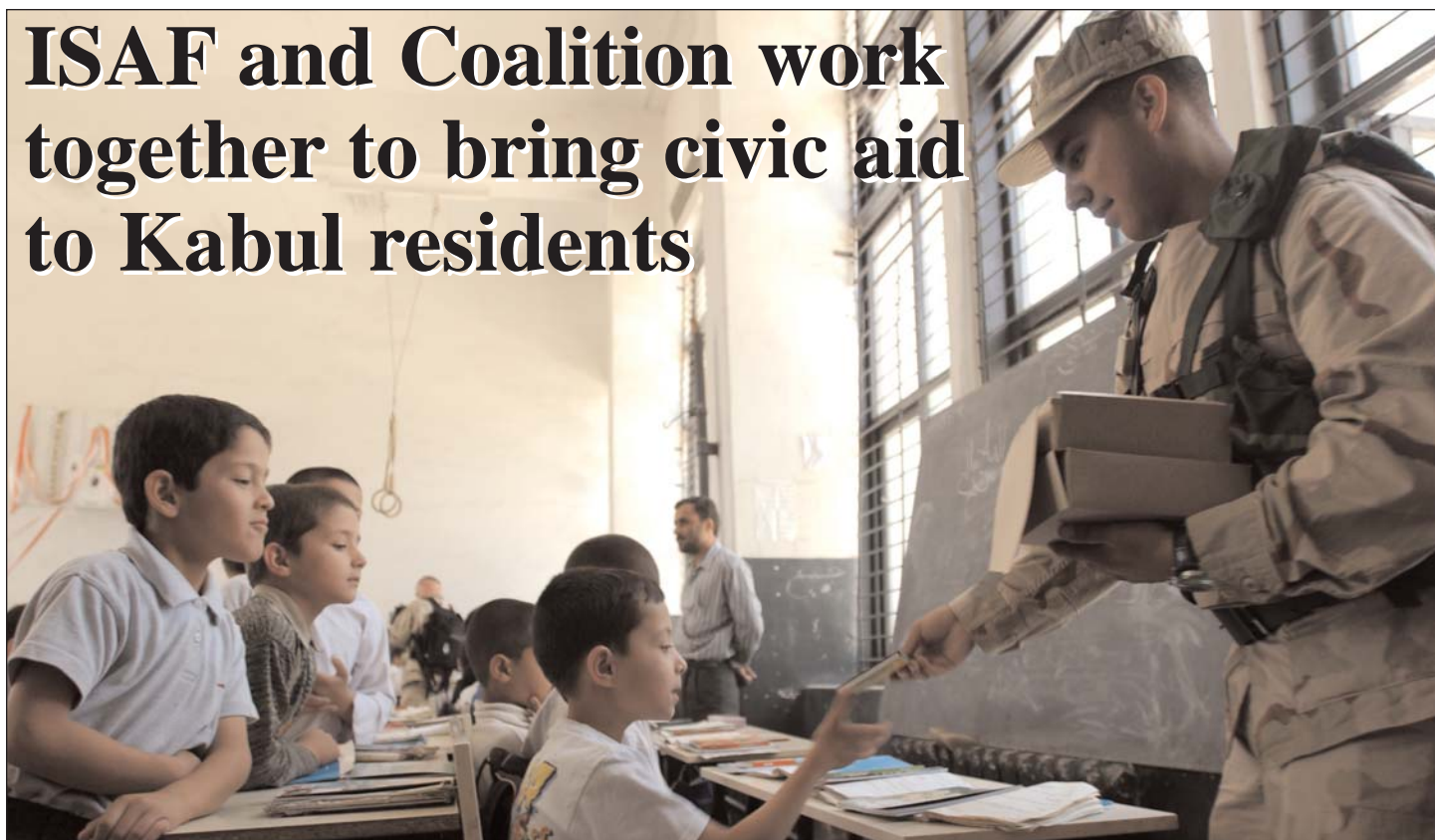
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ISAF and Coalition work together to bring civic aid to Kabul residents



Photos by Army Sgt. Matthew MacRoberts

By Sgt. Matthew MacRoberts
20th Public Affairs Detachment

KABUL, Afghanistan – Shortly after arriving, it became obvious to the service members that this was not a normal school environment.

The students of Lamashaheed School in Kabul attend classes in conditions that make learning difficult and can even endanger the children's health. But, the teachers continue to instruct and the children eagerly attend class.

The U.S. military and the United Kingdom's 2nd Battalion, Royal Gurkha Rifles have embarked on the civic aid mission of supplying hospitals and schools in Kabul with essential supplies.

U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Hendrick Felix and his staff of Soldiers, Airmen and Seamen keep an inventory of prayer rugs, Qurans, children's clothes, sugar, tea, beans, rice, stoves, hygiene kits and school supplies at Bagram Airfield. The supplies are used to help Afghans that require basic supplies.

The RGR supports 13 schools, seven kindergartens and as many local hospitals as their supplies allow.

With the civic aid from Bagram, The RGR is able to help a larger population.

British Army Capt. Daniel Lama, the 2nd RGR's civil assistance representative, said the most important items

given to students are pens, pencils and notebooks.

"This is because at the schools these items are not issued and are, in relative terms, expensive. Colored pencils or crayons are also fantastic and help add some color into their young lives," said



(Above) A student waits for service members to hand out supplies during his class in the gymnasium. (Top) U.S. Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Omar Avila hands out school supplies to students at Lamashaheed School in Kabul.

Lama

Helping supply civic aid items is one part of the Coalition's effort to return life to normal in Afghanistan.

The program is part of the Commanders Emergency Response Program, it is a source of funds for projects that can help Afghans quickly.

For Felix and his crew going to Kabul June 18 to distribute supplies was special.

"It was the first time I helped issue the (civic aid) supplies we stock to Afghans," said Petty Officer 2nd Class Omar Avila, an El Paso, Texas, native and a Navy store keeper. "It felt great actually giving it to them. The crowded classrooms and the conditions in the hospital surprised us."

Lamashaheed - named after one of the school's teachers who during the war was shot and killed in her classroom - is one of the schools receiving assistance.

It was built to accommodate approximately 2,000 students, but since then, the number of students has swelled to more than 6,300; corridors and stairwells are used as makeshift classrooms and tents are used for the overflow.

"My first impression was they really need a place to facilitate the classes," said Felix. "They need at least a fan to circulate the air to just be out in the

See Civic aid next page



Students immediately start working with the new supplies the U.S. and U.K. service members handed out during a civic aid mission in Kabul. The school received supplies for both the students and teachers.
From previous page Civic aid

tents.

"To my surprise, the children and teachers just bear it and withstand the heat. That's sheer determination."

Tents have been erected outdoors so all the children can receive instruction.

These classrooms have dirt floors and those inside are at the mercy of the environment. In summer, temperatures in the tents can rocket up to more than 120 degrees.

Many children experience health problems from the heat: nosebleeds, headaches, nausea, dehydration and heat stroke. Each tent has jugs of water and the teachers try to ensure their students take frequent water breaks to stave off heat injuries.

"The heat is unbearable sometimes," said Rahima, a teacher at Lamashaheed. "The students spent four hours in this heat. My big wish is to get rid of the tents and get proper classrooms."

The supplies donated by the U.S. military will last the children 15-20 days with continuous use.

The hospitals in the community also welcome the assistance brought by the civic aid partnership.

Many medical services are not readily available here, such as CT scans, liver function tests and other blood work.

"Working with the hospitals, we support the weakest members of society," said Lama. "And working with schools,



Staff Sgt. Hendrick Felix, noncommissioned officer in charge of the civic assistance yard at Bagram Airfield, hands out notebooks to students in tents at Lamashaheed School.

we support the future of the country. This has important force protection spin-offs as the military is then seen as a force for good in an additional role from that of a security provider."

Maiwand Hospital's director, Dr. M. Gul, said his main

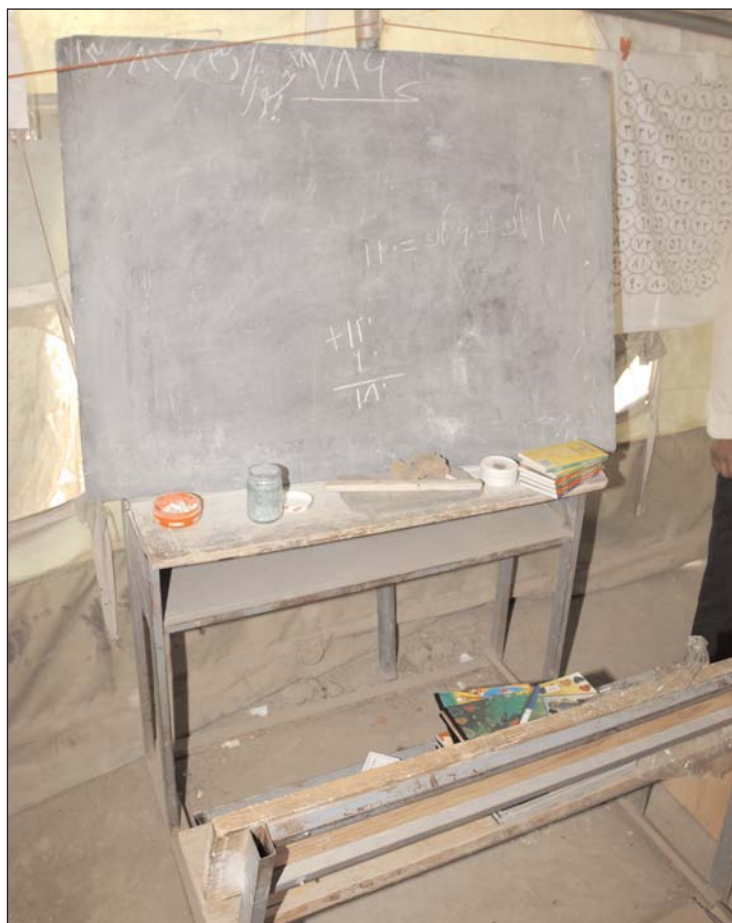
request was for some way for his staff to liaison with Coalition or International Security Assistance Force medical facilities so better diagnoses can be made and treatments prescribed.

"The hospitals aren't really hospitals; they are more like just a building with beds," said Felix. "(The doctors') highest form of medical technology is their minds and their hands.

"If they had the technology we have, they could better treat their patients. But they lack that technology and they lose people every day."

Lama said the most upsetting thing he sees during his distribution of aid is "the seriously ill children in the intensive care ward of Maiwand Hospital. Many of these children have little or no hope of survival because the doctors lack the basic equipment and drugs to diagnose and then treat them."

When asked about his partnership with U.S. forces, Lama said, "I think it would be fair to say that the U.S.



Many students at Lamashaheed School attend classes in tents that have dirt floors and makeshift learning aids. The students are at the mercy of the weather; in the summer temperatures can soar to over 120 degrees.



(Left) Girls at the school laugh after having their picture taken while receiving new pens, pencils, colored markers, and other school supplies from the Commanders Emergency Response Program. U.S. and Royal Gurkha Rifles service members delivered the supplies during the students' classes.

(Below) British Capt. Daniel Lama, 2nd Royal Gurkha Rifles, gives a coloring book, notebook and a pencil sharpener to a student at the school.



and U.K. forces have a close working relationship and this is recognized around the world. The United Kingdom and United States are both committed and totally dedicated to the stability and reconstruction of Afghanistan. This enables the mutual crossover of support to occur. And the development of joint aid projects is, therefore, yet another example of this fruitful relationship."

By providing aid to hospitals and schools, the ISAF and Coalition have not only helped the ill recover faster and students learn, they have also fostered a friendship with local residents.

Enduring Voices

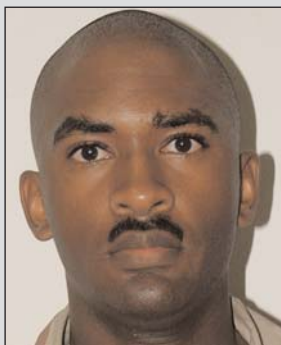
What's the most exciting thing you have done since you have been here?



Army Capt. Jason Dailey
Joint Logistics Command
"My most memorable experience in Afghanistan was a convoy to Kabul."



Polish Army Chief Warrant Officer Krzysztof Eismart
Polish Task Force
"My most memorable experience is meeting all the people from other countries."



Army Sgt. Jamell Emerson
CTJTF-76
"My most memorable experience in Afghanistan was playing volleyball against the Afghan National Army."



Air Force Staff Sgt. Jessica Riordan
Armed Forces Network
"My most memorable experience was eating with the Afghans."



Water released by a dam giving way near Mehtar Lam in Laghman Province trapped 119 people on a small island. ANA and Coalition forces used a CH-47 Chinook helicopter to carry the victims to safety June 23.

Afghan, Coalition forces save flood victims near Mehtar Lam

Coalition Forces Command-Afghanistan

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – The Afghan National Army and local government officials coordinated efforts with Coalition forces to rescue 119 Afghans stranded on a small island by floodwaters.

The stranded people were lifted to safety by a Coalition helicopter June 23 as waters rose on the Indus River near Mehtar Lam in Laghman Province. A dam upstream had given way sending water downstream and trapping the group.

Afghan National Army soldiers on the island coordinated the aircraft loading and were dispensed aid supplies to the victims at a safer area 300 meters away.



The Indus River June 23 as it flooded lowlands downstream of the dam. Deep, fast water created hazardous conditions.

The Laghman Province deputy governor, working in conjunction with aid agencies, coordinated the rescue effort with Coalition forces. Aid agencies

worked with local officials in the area to ensure that Afghans displaced by the flooding had access to shelter, medical attention and food.

"This is a perfect example of the Afghan government taking the lead, working with Afghan National Army and Coalition forces to save lives," said Army Lt. Col. Jerry O'Hara, Combined Joint Task Force-76 spokesman. "We are continuing to work with the government of Afghanistan to ensure the people displaced by this tragic disaster receive the aid they need."

The coalition provincial reconstruction team at Mehtar Lam worked closely with aid agencies and local Afghan leaders to assist in relief efforts.



Photos by Army Staff Sgt. Ken Denny



(Top) ANA soldiers and Marines assist trapped villagers onto a CH-47 helicopter. Villagers were flown about 300 meters to higher ground.

(Center) An ANA soldier carries two frightened children to the helicopter while another soldier assists an elderly woman and child.

(Left) Villagers, with the help of an unidentified Marine, make their way aboard a CH-47 Chinook helicopter.

Bagram hooks Prowlers

By Air Force Capt. Mark Gibson
455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – The airfield here has received a face-lift of sorts with the addition of a new “mobile aircraft arresting system” used to stop tailhook-equipped aircraft in emergencies.

The system is needed by the “Mighty Marine Moon Dogs,” a U.S. Marine Corps squadron, VMAQ-3, flying EA-6B Prowlers and deployed here from Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station, N.C.

“I am immensely proud of these engineers. We have 65 airmen from across the Air Force that came together as a team to make this installation a reality. Every AFSC [Air Force Specialty Code] in my squadron had a hand in this from surveying and preparing the site to construction wooden shelters to protect the equipment,” said Air Force Maj. Matthew Conlan, Commander of the 455th Civil Engineers Squadron.

To conduct safe flying operations in bad weather or emergencies, VMAQ-3 has a couple of specific requirements that are not normally found at Air Force airfields, such as a mobile aircraft arresting system.

U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Jens P. Walle, chief of the Barrier, Maintenance, Electrical, and Power Production Shop in the 455th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron, put it in layman’s terms: “A MAAS is basically a hydraulically activated set of two modified B-52 brakes designed to stop fighter aircraft equipped with a tailhook during emergencies and periods



of inclement weather such as rain or strong cross winds.”

“There is a lot of room on this runway for pilots to land safely, but just in case, our Marine pilots are well qualified to take arrested landings,” said U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Robert Herrmann. “The MAAS is simply a precautionary measure that is available should it be needed to stop a 40,000- to 50,000-pound jet quickly or in the event of emergency.”

If a Prowler needed help from the system, the aircraft would drop its tailhook to grab a 1.25-inch-thick steel cable suspended two inches above the runway by a series of black rubber doughnuts, Walle explained.

The 175-foot cable is attached to the modified B-52 brakes with eight 1,500-foot nylon tapes, each 1/4-inch wide and 1/4-inch thick, rolled up on 66-inch reels, much like fishing line on a reel. As the tapes are pulled out by the hooked aircraft, hydraulics apply pressure to the brakes to slow down and stop the aircraft in 1,000 to 1,200 feet.

One MAAS set comes with a price tag of about \$615,000, which does not include shipping.

“This is an amazing system that was sent here in pieces and took about two and a half grueling days to assemble,” Walle said.

The first step was driving more than 150 52-inch-long aluminum stakes into the ground – ground that had been certified clear of land mines to a depth of only six inches, Walle said.

Maj. Matthew Conlan, commander of the engineer squadron, said they considered Soviet mine-laying doctrine and what had been found in the area. “We decided that (the) ‘surface-proofing’ (of) the area ... gave us enough safety margin to proceed with the work,” Conlan said.

“We were reasonably sure there were no old mines, but not quite 100 percent,” Conlan said. “But we decided the safety benefit the barrier will provide the Marines was greater than the risk of finding any mines.”

Marine Capts. Paul Johnson and Filip Heist were the first pilots to test the new system. “Catching the wire at an airfield has its difficulties, but it is a lot easier than the (aircraft) carrier, because it isn’t moving away from you,” Johnson said.

Air Force Lt. Col. Rich Anderson, deputy commander of the 455th Expeditionary Operations Group, said the test went well. “We were able to not only test the arresting gear but the response time to reset the system as well. This was a great chance for the C E folks to see their equipment in action and see that it works as advertised.”



Photos by Air Force Capt. Robert Herrmann



Photos by Senior Airman Joshua Wolke

Airmen from the 455th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron use jackhammers to drive 52-inch stakes to anchor the MAAS frame next to the runway. The system uses a cable and two B-52 aircraft brakes to stop fighter aircraft equipped with a tailhook during in-flight emergencies and periods of inclement weather.



Photo by Air Force Capt. Mark Gibson



Photo by Air Force Capt. Mark Gibson

Marine Capt. Paul Johnson, E-6B pilot, with VMAQ-3, is the first to hook the wire in his Prowler here. As the pilot prepares to land and is within the correct range, he drops his tailhook before he passes over the barrier cable. As he rolls over the cable, the tailhook catches it.

Service members learn Marine combat skills

By Air Force Staff Sgt. Victoria Meyer
Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan Public Affairs

KABUL, Afghanistan – Being thrown around in the dirt after working a 12- to 15-hour shift in a combat zone may not be an ideal ending to the day.

But 14 Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen at Camp Eggers volunteered for it.

They were students in the Marine Corps martial arts tan belt course that teaches basic close-combat techniques.

The two-week class ran five days a week from 6 to 9 p.m., and with the help of former graduates of the class, was taught by Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Douglas Yagel, senior noncommissioned officer of the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan's Air Plans section.

Yagel decided to teach the martial arts program here for a couple of reasons. Since he is a certified instructor, it is part of his job to teach martial arts. So it keeps his skills sharp. He has instructed more than 50 people since his arrival in Kabul.

"Once you are an instructor, at least for me, you feel the need to teach," Yagel said.

He also thought training a small group of people would allow the combat mentality to trickle down to others in the students' units.

The Marine Corps Martial Arts Program has evolved with the ever-changing styles and concepts of combat. It incorporates techniques from various established martial arts.

The program consists of a belt-ranking system with five basic levels: tan, gray, green, brown and black belt. Black belts can attain one of six degrees of black belt skill.

Each student learned and was tested on techniques they could need in various situations. The techniques included how to restrain people who grab them from behind, how to get out of headlocks and choke holds, and how to stop a person from taking a weapon from them.

The tan belt class is made up of three parts that work together to "produce a warrior": physical, mental and character training.

"It can't be all physical training. You can teach anybody how to kill, but if they don't have the character side and the mental side, they won't use [the training] in the proper context," Yagel said. "It is about knowing when and where to use the techniques."

Yagel and the other instructors had to be creative when planning the physical conditioning because the space and training aids are limited here.

He said the altitude was a concern also, since Kabul is 5,900

feet above sea level.

The purpose of the mental training was to get the students thinking more about their surroundings and to be ready for anything.

He believes everyone here should be in a combat mindset, assessing the intent of everyone around and always thinking like the enemy.

Yagel gave classes on what to look for when you are outside Camp Eggers in the city of Kabul and on the process of thinking through each situation. He taught the students how to be aware of the possibility that something could go wrong.

The techniques taught were the same Marines learn in boot camp, but, Yagel said, the class is a little different here.

"We are in a combat zone. It is easier to relate it to everyday, real-world situations. So the mentality is different," Yagel said. "After the class, you could go out the gate to go home and be confronted with a situation that you just learned about."

The class was challenging for every student.

"I wanted to learn some basic combat martial arts skills. But I really wanted to prove to myself, and others, that I could do it. I knew it was going to be physically tough and I did not want to quit once I started it," Air Force Lt. Col. Timothy Doty said. "I received valuable skills, and many bruises, out of the class."

"It is all a state of mind," Army Maj. Miguel Gonzalez said as beads of sweat dripped from his fore-

head. Gonzalez had just passed the test for his tan belt.

For some students, this was more than a chance to learn martial arts techniques.

"As a staff officer you don't get the opportunity to break a sweat and get in the dirt with the Soldiers as often as you used to," Army Lt. Col. Rick Noriega said. "I am 47 years old. I will never again have the opportunity to get this training - and it is free!"

Everyone who started the class graduated, which is above average. Yagel said the average is 10 graduates in a class of 12.

"I knew everyone would graduate," Yagel said. "They proved themselves every time they came to the pit. The true test is making it through the day-to-day training and the combat-conditioning drills."

Yagel told his class the day before they tested for their belt, "This class will not teach you everything you need to know, but it will get you into the right frame of mind. It will build a warrior mentality."

In the end, they all stepped up and earned their tan belts.



Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Victoria Meyer

Students of the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program execute various take-down techniques in the sand pit. Students were required to properly perform 47 techniques to receive their tan belt qualification.

Spin Buldak gets new water system

By Army Pfc. Vincent Fusco
20th Public Affairs Detachment

SPIN BULDAK, Afghanistan – People of Spin Buldak rejoiced when water flowed for the first time from taps stemming from the new water distribution facility in their city June 16.

Deputy governor of Kandahar Province Dr. Mohammad Hamayon, the troops of the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team, the engineers of the Afghan Gorbol Rehabilitation Organization, citizens of Spin Buldak and civic and military leaders were present for the dedication of the facility.

"This is the first time I'm aware of that anyone's built something like this in Afghanistan," said Army Maj. Ed Singer, the civil affairs team A commander for the Kandahar PRT, from the 450th Civil Affairs Battalion, Riverdale, Md.

The \$160,000 water supply project for the district of Spin Buldak took six months to build, said Singer. The distribution is billed as a centralized alternative to putting in wells, which require constant maintenance.

Originally part of a four-month contract, the beginning of the project was delayed by the heavy rainfall of the winter months, said Ismail Bader, a consultant engineer for Agro Engineering Inc.

The facility houses a 44-kilovolt generator, two wells, a 30,000-gallon water tank, and a 2.5-kilometer piping system along the main roads of Spin Buldak, with taps every 50 meters.

Every tap has a bypass, which allows for taps to be easily repaired or shut off in case of an emergency without compromising the district's water supply.

When the facility is in use, the taps draw water from the water tank until the water level reaches a point where the generator takes over to draw water directly from the wells.

The pipe joints underground are connected with special rubberized fittings, due to the district being an area of increased seismic activity.

The project was completed with Coalition help from the PRT, who assisted in the construction and financial management, said Bader.

Singer signed the contract.

"I've been really familiar with this water supply stuff," said Singer, who in the private sector works for the Maryland health department as director of Carroll County environmental health.

The PRT took on the project after evaluating the district's water distribution plan.

"In the past, water from Pakistan was being brought in by the drum," said Bader.

"It was when we looked at the district's import of water that we decided to do the project," said Singer. "That's the major reason why."

While the project had many helping hands to assist in construction, "a lot of material wasn't available from here or Kandahar," said Bader.

Nearly all of the materials had to be brought in from elsewhere, such as the pipes from Pakistan and the English-built generator from Kabul.

"Any project that requires technology isn't easy to come by in the area," said Singer.

Many site visits were conducted, at a rate of about one every 10 days, to talk with district leaders to make sure things

were going smoothly and the facility was built to standard, said Singer.

The well has an estimated daily use capacity of 200,000 gallons. Before the facility was dedicated, it poured out 60 gallons every minute for 24 hours to test the well's capacity over time.

The centralized facility will be easy for the Afghans responsible for managing it, said Singer. Part of the PRT's contract is to train 10

people from the district on how to operate the system and keep it running over time.

The PRT has another similar project underway in Panjavar. It was started in mid-December and is expected to be complete in July.

"This project has been an experiment that looks like it's going very well," said Singer. "Indoor plumbing could be the next step."

After the tap ran for the first time that day, people joined together in prayer at the site.

"Everyone's so happy to have the water supply system," said Bader. "The people were here to see the tank being filled, and today they're here to see the taps work. This is a wonderful thing."



Photo by Army Pfc. Vincent Fusco

Civic leaders from Spin Buldak gather around to touch the first waters of the tap nearest to the new water distribution center after its dedication June 16.



Special Forces Soldiers honored

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, AFGHANISTAN – Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force - Afghanistan honored four Special Forces Soldiers who were killed in action in eastern Afghanistan with a sunset memorial June 22.

Army Capt. Charles Robinson and Staff Sgt. Leroy Alexander were killed in action June 3, when they were attacked by terrorists who remotely detonated an improvised explosive device in Paktika Province of Afghanistan. Army Staff Sgt. Christopher Piper was severely wounded in action during the same IED strike. Piper passed away as a result of his wounds at the Brooke Army Medical Center, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, June 16. Sgt. 1st Class Victor H. Cervantes was killed in action June 10 while responding to Coalition forces in contact with the enemy in the vicinity of Paktika Province.

All four Soldiers were killed while conducting combat operations in Paktika Province.

U.S. Army Photo

PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



As the sun sets over Kandahar Airfield, Task Force Storm Soldiers troubleshoot problems on an AH-64D Longbow Apache. The Soldiers continue to perform maintenance throughout the night, keeping the aircraft in the skies over Afghanistan.

*Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Derrick L. Mims
D Co. 3-158th Aviation Regiment*

If you have high-quality photos of service members supporting the Coalition mission or enjoying well-deserved off-duty time, please e-mail them to freedomwatch@baf.afgn.army.mil. Please include full identification and caption information, including who is in the photo and what action is taking place.

CENTCOM commander visits Afghan troops

By Army Capt. Cenethea R. Harraway
Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan Public Affairs

KABUL, Afghanistan – The commander of U.S. Central Command met with leaders and Soldiers of the Afghan National Army and observed their training June 21 during a command visit to Afghanistan.

Following a meeting with Afghan President Hamid Karzai, U.S. Army Gen. John Abizaid arrived via helicopter at the ANA's 201st Corps compound at Pol-e Charkhi, located on the outskirts of Kabul. He was accompanied by U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Karl Eikenberry, commander of Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan, Gen. Bismullah Khan, chief of the ANA General Staff, and Lt. Gen. Sher Karimi, chief of Operations for the ANA General Staff.

Abizaid was greeted at the helipad by the 201st Corps commander, Maj. Gen. Moeen, and U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. John Brennan, chief of the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan.

The tour of the 201st Corps started with visits to a number of ANA training classes. Abizaid observed soldiers conducting medical, communications and maneuver training. Abizaid told them he appreciated what they were doing for their country by serving in

the ANA.

Abizaid also participated in a unit inspection. Flanked by Khan and Moeen, the CENTCOM commander trooped the line of Afghan soldiers as they stood in formation.

A highlight of Abizaid's visit was a demonstration of mechanized infantry tactics using M113A2 armored personnel carriers recently donated to the ANA by the United States.

At the end of the visit, Khan and Moeen thanked Abizaid for the assistance the U.S. government and its Coalition partners are providing to help build the ANA.

As Abizaid prepared to depart, he thanked both the U.S. and Afghan Soldiers for their service in Afghanistan and then directed his final comments to his Afghan hosts.

"Every period of history has a short window of opportunity, and the period of opportunity for Afghanistan is now,"

he said. "It is your courage, and the courage of your soldiers, that will take control of this period of history and cement the freedom of Afghanistan."



Photo by Army Capt. Cenethea Harraway

Army Gen. John Abizaid (center), U.S. Central Command commander, displays a ceremonial dagger and an Afghan traditional vest known as a "Waskat Afghani" presented by leaders of the Afghan National Army's 201st Corps. With him is Afghan Gen. Bismullah Khan, chief of the ANA General Staff.



Dari/Pashtu phrase of the week

Dari/Pashtu phrase of the week:

Dari

Kai Bozarg ast?

Kai-bo-zorg-ast?

Pashtu

Sook masher dae?

Sok-ma-shar-day?

The Soviets were interested in building up the education system and extending education into the rural areas, but their efforts were soundly rejected. After the Soviets withdrew, what was left of the education system fell completely apart in the civil war. Kabul University closed, its faculty members dispersing to Pakistan, Iran, or the West. Children were either taught at home, in the local mosque, or not at all.

(Source: <http://www.culturalorientation.net/afghan/aeco.html>)

West Point gets first Afghan cadet

Twenty-one students accepted into Class of 2009

By Eric Bartelt

WEST POINT, N.Y. – The first Afghan native to attend the U.S. Military Academy reported for duty at West Point June 27.

Shoaib Yosoufzai, one of 21 international cadets accepted as a member of the Class of 2009, comes from Laghman providence in Eastern Afghanistan.

Yosoufzai spent two years at Kabul University learning civil engineering. Continuing in the engineering field and gaining a strong military background are two of the reasons he wanted to come to West Point.

"I wanted a military career and the U.S. Military Academy has a very good educational system that helps with your leadership skills," Yosoufzai said. "They have a good engineering program and I would like to help my people in every field that I major in here."

He started the process about a year-and-a-half ago as one of more than 60 people applying from universities and high schools throughout Afghanistan.

His father, Hamdullah Yosoufzai, who is dean of academics at the National Military Academy Afghanistan, convinced him that coming to West Point would be the best thing for him and his country.

"My father told me everything about the military academy and told me it was my decision," Yosoufzai explained. "[He said] If I study at the U.S. Military Academy it would be tough, but I would have a really good future and help my country and people."

Yosoufzai studied some English grammar at Kabul University, which helped him with his SAT exam and for the past four months has built his English language skills at the University of Nebraska-Omaha.

He said his generation now has the right to make their own decisions, unlike a few years ago under Taliban rule, and he is happy for all the help from the U.S. and the international community. Also, his time in Nebraska changed some of his views of Americans as well.

"Before coming to the U.S., I was thinking the people would be too busy here and no one would like to help me out," Yosoufzai said. "But, when I got here, I knew it was different and everyone was friendly and interested in knowing about Afghanistan and helping the Afghan people."

Yosoufzai said he feels lucky to have this chance to make a difference in so many peoples' lives and wants to help build a military and government that lasts in Afghanistan.

"I want to help my country build a professional military and stable government," Yosoufzai said. "I will do everything that my government tells me to do and, as an officer, I can say that it will be my duty to fight against injustice and work for the military."

He is appreciative of Col. James Wilhite, Office of Military Cooperation - Afghanistan academy team chief, and Capt. Robert Romans Jr., USMA admissions international cadets section, for their help in making his arrival here as painless as possible.

Romans goes through the tedious process of evaluating all international cadets files, with the help of the English, math and admissions committee, to select the best candidates.

Romans believes Yosoufzai has a golden opportunity to help his country, much like West Point graduates have been benefiting America for more than 200 years.

"It's the desire and drive to help rebuild his own country that will carry him through the next four years at West Point," Romans said.

Quake shakes Afghanistan

By Air Force Capt. Mark Gibson
455th Air Expeditionary Wing, Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – A 5.4-magnitude earthquake shook Afghanistan June 20. Tremors were felt from Bagram to Kabul by service members deployed for Operation Enduring Freedom.

Air Force Tech. Sgt. Johnathan Raford was settling into his morning routine when he felt the earth shake and heard his building rattle. "At first I thought something was wrong with my chair or there was a heavy truck going by," said Raford, the NCO in charge of administrative support for the 455th Expeditionary Mission

Support Group at Bagram.

"I have grown accustomed to the ground shaking when ... there are controlled demolition explosions here, so I did not think much about it. An earthquake was the furthest thing from my mind," Raford said.

U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Leslie Orr, NCO in charge of the 455th Expeditionary Operations Group's Combat Weather Team, reported that the quake's center was in the Hindu Kush mountains 140 miles northeast of Bagram.

No significant damage was reported.



The 201st Corps of the Afghan National Army conducts a mechanized infantry demonstration using M113A2 armored personnel carriers during a visit by Army Gen. John Abizaid, commander of U.S. Central Command. The U.S. donated 79 of the APCs to the Afghan National Army.



"The more Marines I have around the better I like it!"

Army Gen. Mark Clark